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Feathers Flew Over Cuba

More feathers flew faster over the Cuban issue in the 1960 presidential campaign than were stirred up by any other pinpointed issue. They have been stirred up again by a mild statement of Allen C. Dulles, former CIA director, that Richard Nixon errs in a statement his opponent knew about preparations to invade Cuba before Mr. Kennedy called for an invasion in one of his campaign speeches.

It helps to review this ruckus feather by feather.

The first feather flew on Oct. 20, 1960, when candidate Kennedy unloaded blame for Cuba on candidate Nixon and said the United States should "attempt to strengthen the non-Batista democratic anti-Castro forces in exile and in Cuba itself who offer eventual hope of overthrowing Castro."

To clinch the proposition he said that "thus far these fighters for freedom have had virtually no support from our government."

In his book "Six Crises," Mr. Nixon says his rival knew this was what the United States was doing, though Mr. Dulles now believes Mr. Nixon misunderstood what Mr. Kennedy had been told as part of his campaign briefing by the CIA.

Be that as it may, Mr. Nixon certainly knew what the United States was doing. Yet, what did he have to say about Mr. Kennedy's proposal?

On Oct. 22 he called it the "most shock-

ingly reckless proposal ever made in our history by a presidential candidate during a campaign." He said it violated U.S. commitments and was an invitation for the Soviet Union to intervene on the side of Fidel Castro. He said the result easily could be world war.

The feathers now were really flying.

The next day Mr. Kennedy accused Mr. Nixon of distortions and added this: "You have developed the technique of having your writers rewrite my statements, using these rewritten statements and attacking me for things I have never said or advocated. I never have advocated intervention in Cuba in violation of our treaty obligations."

Mr. Nixon thereupon fired back a telegram saying if Mr. Kennedy had stood by his original statement he only would have been "advocating the policy which the administration has been following for months"—the same policy Mr. Nixon said "shockingly reckless" when it first was proposed by Mr. Kennedy.

Never did two political chickens peck at each other more disastrously—one by advocating something, the other already helping to put into effect, the other by denying the propriety of doing something already being done, then each reversing his position.

The moral: Foreign policy should not be discussed in political campaigns. You can't find the truth for the feathers.